

PARENTS FLAG EDMONTON

Newsletter

May 1994

Next Meeting Will Be:  
Tuesday May 17, 1994

7:30 p.m.

For more information phone Lynne at [REDACTED]  
The May meeting will be the last meeting of the season.

NEWSLETTER

I understand that I have missed mailing newsletters to some people. I would like to apologize to these people. Never have I shown prejudice in this matter, only negligence. I have a far too busy schedual in my life therefore I have decided that I will no longer do the newsletter. Perhaps we should consider if we even need a monthly newsletter, the cost of mailing every month is high and the content is usually sparse. I would be willing to consider doing a newsletter on a quarter annual schedual or if something important comes up. Please bring any of your own ideas to the next meeting and if anyone still wants a monthly newsletter do step forward and take it over.

Gay Pride Week

This years Gay Pride Week will be June 17-25th. The pride march will be on the 25th as will the P-FLAG picnic. We will be selling pop and hot dogs as we did last year. Some members indicated that they would donate prizes so please let us know at the next meeting. Also we need people to donate either time, money or supplies for the picnic, let us know at the next meeting or call Cindy at [REDACTED] to volunteer.

Ribbons

This year P-FLAG is going to provide pride ribbons on a donation basis we will set up styrofoam displays with donation jars at various gay positive businesses in the city. We will also sell ribbons at the parade and picnic. We will need volunteers to help cut ribbons and sell them. Speak up at the next meeting if you are interested. Proceeds from ribbon sales will go to the Pink Triangle youth group as they are in serious need of money.

Pins

There will be Stonewall 25th anniversary pins that read "Stonewall 25 A Global Celebation of Pride Edmonton Pride Week '94". Watch for them during pride week and be sure to buy one for yourself or someone you love.

TO ALL THE SRAIGHT PEOPLE WHO LOVE ME

"I don't approve of homosexuality, but I do love you."

If this is how you feel, fine. You can feel anyway you choose, and I would not change that. But there are certain things to keep in mind.

If you cringe when I tell you about my lover or my lifestyle or my gay friends, I will not force it down your throat. But do not be offended if I am cool and distant, or if I do not call you often. You have placed a taboo on the topic of my life, and I cannot be close to someone who does not want to hear about my life.

And if you do want to hear about it, please ask questions. I want to answer. If you are curious about other things, check out a book or rent a movie or call a hotline. Remember that I am a person, not an authority on the gay community, and I do not want to generously describe details about my sex life.

And if you vote, think about me. Are you voting to take away my rights? If this is so, how can I believe that you love me?

And if you want to tell me why you think I should not be gay, I will

listen to you. Once. And if you decide that you are against my lifestyle, don't be surprised to find that you are against me.

Erica Kleinman

#### Street Safety 4

When you're alone and life is making you lonely you can always go DOWNTOWN! Have a great time, but be sure to stay under bright city lights, avoid dimly lit streets and stay away from dark alleys!

On well lit streets you are visible, which makes you less attractive to attackers. They want to do their dirty work furtively, in the shadows where they cannot be seen or identified. They may even have accomplices hiding in the darkness.

Visibility affords other protections too. It is easier for you to walk defensively on a well lit street. You can use your ability to see whats going on around you to avoid an incident. If others can see you being attacked, they may come to your aid be scaring off your assailants, or by calling the police.

If you are assaulted identification of your attackers will be necessary, so stay on well lit streets, where you can get a good look at them.

#### Street Safety 5

You can do more than drink in the bars. You can also find refuge there; it can be a safe spot.

When you must go out at night, always know where safe spots are. You never know when an incident might happen, but you do not know which areas of the city might be dangerous. Try to avoid these areas if possible. But if you can't, and your journey takes you into a danger zone, plan your route so that you are never far from a safe spot.

Restaurants and bars are safe spots because attackers are not likely to follow you inside. Any establishment will do. From there you can call the police, or a taxi. You can wait it out untill the trouble passes, or you might find a witness. Busses can be safe spots too, if one comes along, get on it.

Safety should be a matter of habit, so stay on well lit streets, walk decisively and defensively, and think of places along the way where you can find refuge.

#### Street Safety 6

Don't they always say, the more the "merrier"? But if more is merrier, when walking on the street at night, more is safer too! If you have to go out at night, try to avoid being alone. Take a friend along, not just for company, but also for safety. Two people are less likely to be attacked than one. Three people are less likely to be attacked than two.

Bashers like odds of six to one. You reduce those odds considerably if you are with someone, and you reduce the odds of being attacked also.

There is safety in numbers. The birds and animals know that; it is one of natures protective mechanisms. The bigger the group you are with the safer you are. But if you are leaving a bar with a new friend, tell an old friend who you are with, and where you expect to go.

#### Summer Picnic

We will be having another summer picnic this year, it will be discussed at the May meeting. If you miss the meeting call Joan at [REDACTED]

# Parents of gays travel from tears to tolerance

*A support group for families evolves into advocacy for gay rights*

By CHERYL LAVIN

Chicago Tribune News Service

**W**hen Mitzi Henderson's son came out of the closet, she went in.

And she stayed there for five years. Years filled with guilt, shame, confusion, fear, pain and isolation. She lived in a small town in the Midwest, and she didn't know anyone else with a gay child.

"I didn't think there were any gay people in Minnesota," she says. So when her son told her about a group for parents of gays, she called. "I said, 'I have a gay son,' and I started to cry. It took me a year to call again."

Henderson is standing in a living room in Chicago on a sunny Sunday afternoon. As she tells her story, the men and women in the room nod their heads. They've known those emotions; they've cried those tears.

They're members of PFLAG: Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.

PFLAG began in 1981 as a support group. Parents would come together, exchange first names, hold hands and cry.

"I'm told the only problem in the early days was having enough Kleenex," says Gayle Jacobs, who is host for this meeting for national board members and local gay activists.

Today PFLAG has 350 chapters in the United States and 28 others around the world, a membership of 24,000 families and a much broader agenda. It's not just for parents who need help anymore; it's for parents who want to help. They don't want to change their children; they want to change the world.

"I finally realized," says Henderson, PFLAG's president, "that the problem wasn't with my son or with me. The problem was out there, with society."

PFLAG is about to launch Project Open Mind, an ambitious, multimedia blitz involving TV commercials, billboards and transit ads.

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MICHAEL FRYER/Knight-Ridder News Service

Sandra Gillis (left), executive director of Parents Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, and a lesbian, and her daughter, Soji Barger, who is heterosexual, listen to members of a support group.

belong to their clubs and their churches."

## First shock, then guilt

Gayle Jacobs got a call one day when her daughter, Hilary Rosen, was a college freshman. "She was crying because her boyfriend found out she was having an affair with her roommate. I almost fell off my chair."

After the shock wore off, Jacobs says, the guilt kicked in, and then the fear, and then a profound readjustment of her expectations. "Hilary had always been Miss Perfect. Deep down, I used to think she'd be the first Jewish woman president."

Rosen, who is now 35, is a recording-industry executive and co-chairwoman of the board of the Human Rights Campaign Fund, the country's largest gay and lesbian political organization. "My mother has come a long way in the 17 years since I told her I was gay," she says.

"I said, 'Mommy, I'm unhappy, and this is why,' and her first reaction was, 'Of course you're unhappy; you're a lesbian!' But I don't think we used that word then. There was no immediate acceptance, but there was clearly immediate interest. She took it upon herself to understand what it meant. It took a lot of work and a lot of communication."

Throughout college Rosen dated

more accepting when she and her girlfriend bought a house together. "She saw me settling in and living just like normal people do."

## Gay partner not invited

Sitting quietly at the PFLAG meeting with her daughter is Barbara Foster (a pseudonym). She's not a member. She and Jacobs went to college together, and they renewed a friendship when Jacobs moved to Chicago a few years ago. They were having lunch one day, and Jacobs mentioned Hilary in a way that made it clear she was a lesbian. Foster said her daughter was gay, too.

Foster's daughter, Susan (also a pseudonym), is 37. When she was 22, she told her mother she was a lesbian. Foster thought it was just a phase.

Says Barbara Foster: "I'm not very knowledgeable about it. That's my loss. I have my own prejudices and thoughts."

When Susan Foster came out to her parents, they saw a therapist who told them they were entitled to "lay down some ground rules," such as whether Susan could bring a date to family dinners and social functions.

"Several years ago my mother had a dinner dance and said, 'You're invited, but we don't want your partner there. I made it very clear to her that I wasn't coming alone, and I

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"We want to make it chic to either be one or know one," says the group's executive director, Sandra Gillis, a lesbian and mother of three.

The members of PFLAG feel they're in a unique position to influence attitudes. "We're the mainstream speaking to the mainstream," says Henderson, who lives in Menlo Park, Calif. "People will listen to us who wouldn't listen to gays. We're their friends, their colleagues; we play on their teams; we

readjustment of her expectations. "Hilary had always been Miss Perfect. Deep down, I used to think she'd be the first Jewish woman president."

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Throughout college Rosen dated men and women, and Jacobs held out the hope that men would win. In her senior year, Rosen dated a Harvard Law School graduate, a man with all the right credentials, and Jacobs thought he might be the one.

"When that didn't work out, I became much more realistic," Jacobs says. "I realized it wasn't who the man was, it was who she was."

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"Several years ago my mother had a dinner dance and said, 'You're invited, but we don't want your partner there.' I made it very clear to her that I wasn't coming alone, and I didn't go. That was hard for both of us."

The rules have evolved over the years to the point that Susan Foster regularly brings a partner to her parents' home and on family vacations but not to large social functions.

"I'm more thinking of other people," says Barbara Foster, who has discussed Susan's homosexuality with only "one or two close friends."

"For a long time, my mother really believed her friends didn't know I was a lesbian, and that's silly," Susan Foster says. "Many of them have made comments to me about it. I'm not very closeted."

Susan Foster says there has been a change in her mother's attitude since she learned that Jacobs' daughter is gay:

"That seemed to be a turning point for her. Gayle sent her an article about Hilary and said, 'That's my daughter, and I'm so very proud of her,' and that opened up my mother's eyes that there are other bright, intelligent, intellectual lesbians as well as other parents in her circles who have children who are gays and lesbians."

It was strange for Susan Foster to attend a PFLAG meeting with her mother. "I've been out for 15 years at work and in the community, and I'm very comfortable with it, but being in a gay situation with my mother, this was a first. I wasn't sure how she'd feel."

Says Barbara Foster, who plans to attend more PFLAG meetings: "I was comfortable. I'm still working through in my own mind that I have a daughter that's gay. I'm not even sure all the things that I feel about that. I have to work through them. But that's my problem, not hers."

Foster is still not ready to tell people she has a gay daughter. Jacobs tells everybody. What do they say?

"They say, 'Oh,'" says Jacobs. "They just say, 'Oh.'"

June 25 - P.M. Princess Eliz. across from swimming pool.  
Picnic in ~~Hawthorne~~ Park 2:00 - 5:00 pm

- AM. Parade - anyone volunteer to walk
  - 4 block walk last year
  - carry a banner?
  - meet at the gazebo at 1:00 pm - check in Day & Lesbian Community Center.

- CJSR radio station wants to promote G & L activities  
(made \$900 at Princess Theatre on Sunday)

- call Lynn if we have prizes to donate.

1994 - International Year of the Family  
L PFLAB is involved

Sept (long weekend) - Conference in San Diego (?)

June 19 - Inn on 7th - Fair

11:00 AM - 5:00 PM

- sharing table & Candid Enterprises
  - { will have brochures, pens, etc.
  - { volunteers?

Lost Language of Cranes - good <sup>video</sup> film on gay

Always My Kid - good video (PFLAB group in Houston - autobiographies)

Letter from G & L Centre - need money

- for \$10 month we can have our mtgs there, they'll take phone calls for us, P.O. box there.

5 lawyers working for free to accumulate case histories to help the teacher who was fired - govt. is appealing the case } Delwin Friend

Father Murray <sup>Billet</sup> may speak at a fall mtg.

I volunteered to do the newsletter.

A Kind of Family - CBC - Friday? - good film

Greenwood bookstore - good section on G's & L's  
Now That You Know

Meetings - 3rd Tues of each month. Sept 20/94 next mtg.